



## NEWS RELEASE

United States  
Department of Agriculture

Forest Service  
Idaho Panhandle National Forest  
3815 Schreiber Way  
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815

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**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Investigation of Human-Caused Myrtle Creek Fire**

**Coeur d'Alene, ID** – Officials from the Idaho Panhandle National Forests announced today that the 3,800 acre Myrtle Creek fire west of Bonners Ferry was human-caused. A Forest Service Fire Investigation Team analyzed the cause and origin of the fire, determining that it started in a logging unit along Myrtle Creek Road #633 during the evening hours of September 2, 2003. Through the examination of evidence at the scene and fire burn patterns, the team determined that the fire was human-caused.

The U.S. Forest Service is soliciting information from anyone who has knowledge of person(s) in the vicinity of the four-mile marker on Myrtle Creek Road #633 during the afternoon or evening hours of September 2, 2003. The team will continue the investigation and would like to speak with anyone who may have knowledge or information about individual(s) who may be responsible for starting the Myrtle Creek fire. Any information may be directed to Special Agent Kim West at (406) 758-5267.

Myrtle Creek fire is located in the Bonners Ferry municipal watershed and has likely caused some damage to the watershed by significantly reducing water quality. Alternate sources of water for the city are being explored with the help of a variety of local, state and federal government agencies.

Approximately 695 firefighters are currently working to contain the fire and firefighting costs to date total \$2.4 million. Development of alternate water sources may cost significantly more. According to Idaho Panhandle Forest Supervisor Ranotta McNair, "the high costs of fire suppression, damage to the watershed, and costs of mitigating the degraded water quality emphasize the need to find out who is responsible for starting the fire. The help and cooperation of the public is requested in successfully concluding this investigation."

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